

# Travel, Trade, and Tribes

## TEP Exhibition: *Threads of the Silk Road*



### Intentions

- Students will become familiar with the Silk Road and its importance as a historic trade route.
- Students will explore the themes, Travel, Trade, and Tribes as they relate to the Silk Road as well as contemporary life.
- Students will utilize a variety of basic artistic materials using imagery and symbolism to convey ideas.

### Materials

- 8 ½ x 11 copy paper
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- Scissors & glue
- A variety of collage and stamping materials if desired
- Suggested Educational Materials: Silk Road Story Boards: Travel, Trade and Tribes, and Teacher Guide: The Age of Exploration by ACG United (included).

### Backdrop



*Photographs by Edgar Gomez*

The history of the Silk Road is filled with legendary explorers, wandering armies, pilgrims, spies, merchants, and mercenaries. Its vast 7000-mile network of trade routes from China to the Mediterranean existed for almost 2000 years, connecting the Far East to Europe. This collection of photographs depicts surviving remnants of this great ancient highway and descendants of the historic peoples along its route.

Beginning in the 2nd century BC, caravans departed the ancient Chinese capitol along three major routes west with hundreds of smaller byways. Extensions of the route began farther east or south in Korea, Japan, and India. Using a series of way stations and oases as links, the Silk Road crossed the wild expanses of central Asia to reach the western markets of Baghdad, Byzantium (modern Istanbul), and Rome.

For centuries, the Silk Road brought changes to the cultures along its path and wealth and knowledge to many people. It was a significant factor in the development of the civilizations of China, India, Persia, Europe and Arabia, and contributed to international interdependence and understanding. The Silk Road lasted until the 15th century when newly discovered sea routes to Asia opened up, providing less risky transport.

Utah State Core Resources on the Silk Road: [World Civilizations Link](#), [Silk Road 6<sup>th</sup> Grade](#), [Geography Along the Silk Road](#).

# Activity

Students will create a handmade book and then incorporate artist trading cards, currency and stories to share with other students as they study the Silk Road. As an alternative, you can utilize this exercise as a way to examine contemporary culture and compare it to themes related to the Silk Road. You can incorporate one aspect, or all, depending on class time. This project can be executed over the course of several class periods to extend the learning.

1. **Simple Handmade Book:** The small book will function as the place for stories, currency and artist trading cards to be exchanged. You can use any simple book binding style. Examples [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)! Students can use 8 ½ x 11 copy paper cut in half lengthwise. Each piece can be stacked folded in half to form the spine of the book. For older students you may want to use the entire piece of 8 ½ x 11 paper folded. By using a sturdier cover from cut magazine covers, cardstock or craft paper, students can personalize the book. Use a stapler to bind the center. Students can use the same sturdy material to staple or glue a pocket on the inside front cover to gather artifacts from other students.
2. **Artist Trading Cards:** ATC's are small individual works of art, that tell a story through pictures about the artists identity. The artist trading cards can be thought of like a passport-or a marker for your identity. In this case they are meant to be traded with other artists/students as a way to become acquainted with another person. Students can incorporate imagery, symbols, and words to imagine that they were someone in a specific country, or they can use the cards to describe themselves and aspects of their everyday lives. A simple example is [here](#) and [here](#). You can also make [handmade stamps](#) to leave your mark on the card of another artist.
3. **Handmade Currency:** Currency, or money, is a symbolic object, with clues about a places hero's, environment, history, and people. Currency is used as a method of exchanging things. Students can use an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper cut horizontally in three strips to create their currency. You can use basic drawing materials, or incorporate collage materials and specialty papers as well. The story of the Silk Road is one where trade and exchange leads to understanding and meshing of many different practices and cultures. Here are some links to currency related art projects, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)!

## Suggested Exercises:

-Set up an environment in your classroom in which students can "travel" and engage with new people and places. Teams can set up stations where they represent certain countries and customs related to the Silk Road. This exercise can also be valuable as a lesson on contemporary culture and customs. Ask students to use their handmade book as a 'field journal' or log to collect notes or observations along the way.

-Ask students to imagine purchases they desire to make with their currency. Log them in the handmade book. What does that good or service provide? What does it say about the owner? How would you decide which are most important?

-Students can interview other students about their customs, family life, travel experience, and values. Assign students a task such as a series of questions to ask another student. For example, "Have you ever traveled to another place or country? What things were the same? What things were different?" These can be logged in the handmade book.

-Students can also include their own observations about similarities and differences in experiences. Talk about the concept of tribes, and shared cultural practices. Modes of travel and navigation can also be compared and contrasted.

-Ask students to examine the currency of another student. What clues are there about this person? What stories can be gathered from the artist trading cards? Think of the exchange of information as an exchange of "goods" where students may gain insight into another valuable practice or idea that another student had. How is something one person has, valuable to another? Collect these in the pocket of your book.

*These lessons are intended to be adaptable by classroom teachers for all ages. This lesson accompanies the Silk Road Storyboard Themes: Travel, Trade and Tribes, as well as the suggested Teacher Guide: The Age of Exploration by ACG United.*

## Links to the Core

### Visual Arts:

- Explore a variety of art media, techniques and processes.

### Language Arts:

-Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

**-Social Studies:** Students will use geographic tools and skills to locate and describe places on earth.